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“Zen: from China to cyberspace”

Why Dharma is now more relevant than ever

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Abstract

This essay discuss how Chan flourished out of the Dhyana tradition. How it came from China, moved to Korea, Japan, spread to the West, including USA, Europe and Australia. And then on new media like Internet. The author believes that the straightforward and non-hierarchic approach of Zen made it an appropriate answer to the needs of millions of people along the centuries, and this is especially true here and now.

After seeing how Seon spread so far, we then discuss practical ways of making it even more accessible in the cyberspace, with potential and limits of new media. Chan, Seon and Zen stand for similar Dharma schools, respectively in China, Korea and Japan. Zen became a house-hold name, because Japanese Zen masters played an important role in spreading awareness about it, that is why Zen has been used as title for this booklet.

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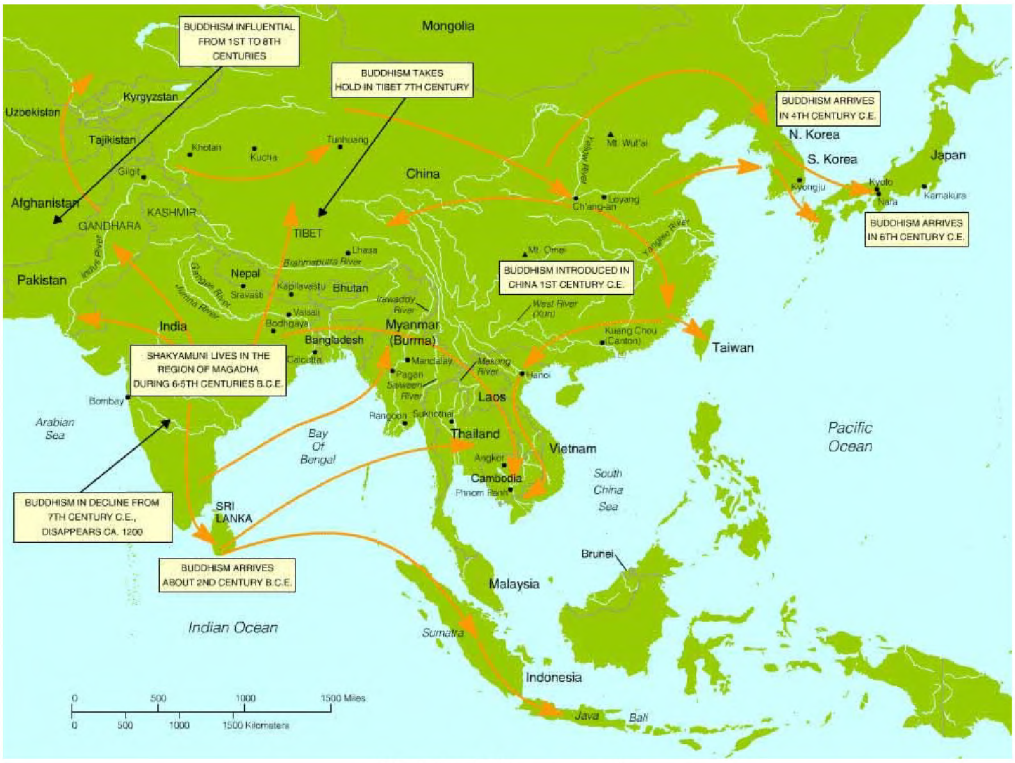
Introduction: how Chan came to be

Dhyāna Yoga (yoga of meditation) is one of the four branches of yoga described in The Bhagavad Gītā, together with Karma Yoga (yoga of action in the world), Jnāna yoga (yoga of Wisdom and intellectual endeavor), and Bhakti Yoga (yoga of devotion to God). Dhyāna is also found in Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras. According to tradition, Bodhidharma brought his lineage school of a line of dhyāna masters from India to China. After a unremarkable meeting with a Chinese ruler in the south of the Country, Bodhidharma went to the north at a Shaolin Temple, until several disciples found him.

With growing importance and independence, the lineage school that was attributed to Bodhidharma became known as the "Chan" school in China. Huineng is the most influential figure in Chinese Chan who is considered the sixth in line of the founders of the school. He is credited with firmly establishing Chan Buddhism as an independent Buddhist school in China.



Credits: Kenyon.edu

Dhyāna was very important for the Mahāyāna tradition. Being the fifth of six perfections (pāramitās), is translated as meditation, or meditative stability. In China, dhyāna was originally transliterated as chan-na, then shortened to chan. Dhyāna, usually under the related term of samādhi, together with the second and sixth pāramitās are known as the threefold training of Buddhism: śīla, dhyāna or samādhi, and prajñā. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, one has to be effective in all three studies.

When Buddhism was brought to China, the Buddhist masters tended to become more focused or primarily adept in one of the three studies. Vinaya masters specialized in the monastic rules of discipline and the moral precepts (śila). Dharma masters in the wisdom

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teachings of the sūtras and Buddhist treatises (śāstras). Dhyāna or Chan masters specialized in meditation practice and states of samādhi. Monks would often begin their training under one kind of master, such as a vinaya master, and then transfer to another master, such as a Dharma master or a dhyāna master, to further their training and studies. At that time there was no separate Chan school.

Zen is a dynamic Buddhist school, where the lives and examples of its practitioners are more important than an academic approach based only on studying texts. This approach makes easier for Chan than for other Buddhist schools to adapt to the "here and now", and so Seon will grow more and more online.

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1. Chan Buddhism

Credits: Hsuyun.org

Chan raised as an answer to the need of the laypeople who wanted to wholeheartly practice Buddhism, without leaving it only to monks. Chan offered a straight-forward, non-dogmatic and intuitive approach to Buddhism, which was what laypeople wanted and still want.

Through Hellenistic Gandhara and then the Silk Road, Buddhism was firstly introduced to China during the Han period (206 BC-220 AD). The Indian prince and monk Bodhidharma is the traditional founder of Chán (early 5th century), who went to China to teach a "special transmission outside scriptures" which "did not stand upon words". He settled in the kingdom of Wei where he took among his disciples Daoyu and Huike. Shortly before his death, Bodhidharma appointed Huike to succeed him, making Huike the first Chinese born patriarch and the second patriarch of Chán in China, passing him a robe, a bowl, and a copy of the Lankavatara Sutra. The transmission then passed to the second patriarch (Huike), the third (Sengcan), the fourth patriarch (Dao Xin) and the fifth patriarch (Hongren).

Bodhidharma focused on direct insight about one's own experience, under the instruction of a Zen teacher, discouraging misguided veneration of Buddhas for the sake of superstition. Often attributed to Bodhidharma is the Bloodstream Sermon, which was composed after his death. It is said he had a meeting with Emperor Wu of Liang. The Emperor sought an audience with him, and asked how much karmic merit he had gained from his noble support of Buddhism. Bodhidharma replied, "None at all." The Emperor asked, "Then what is the truth of the teachings?" Bodhidharma replied, "Vast emptiness, nothing holy." So the

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emperor asked, "Then who are you standing in front of me?" Bodhidharma replied, "I do not know," and walked out. A legend involving Bodhidharma is that he visited the Shaolin Temple in the kingdom of Wei, at some point, and taught them a series of exercises which became the basis for the Shaolin martial arts.

Chan approach to change and interdependency, and the already existing stratus of Chinese religions like Taoism and Confucianism, were fertile lands for a non-theistic religion. Instead of promising access to secret knowledge, Chan proved what we need to know is already in front of us, we just need to see as it is. Chan evolved with the adoption, and adaptation, of Indian Buddhist practice into China. Overall, the main criticism against Buddhism was that it may lead to people being detached from family and wordly affairs.

While the visit of Bodhidharma in the 5th Century is often considered the tipping point in the spread of Chan, this Buddhist school has been already under development in China before his arrival, around the Han period. The other three first Buddhist schools in China were Tiantai (Heavenly Terrace, whose name came from its princiapl center on the mountain in Chekiang; founded by Hui-ssu around 515-576), Huayan (Flower ornament, which lasted from about 5th century to 8th), and Ching-te (Pure Land, started during the Later Han Dynasty; inititally, not a formal lineage by itself, more of a popular broad movement until teachers in the sixth to ninth centuries started to develop a more sistematic school). Their members decided to use Chinese versions of the texts instead of the Indian ones, by translating and re-ranking the different Sutras.

An important translator was Xuanzang (602 - 664). Born in Henan province, he displayed signs of intellectual and spiritual greatness even at an early age. From boyhood he took to reading sacred books, mainly the Chinese Classics and the writings of the ancient sages. While residing in the city of Luoyang, Xuanzang became a monk at the age of thirteen. Due to the political and social unrest, he moved to Chengdu (in Szechuan), where he was ordained at the age of twenty. Then he travelled throughout China in search of sacred books of Buddhism. At length, he came to Chang'an, then under the peaceful rule of Emperor Taizong of Tang, where he decided to visit India. He became famous for his seventeen year overland trip to India and back, which is recorded in detail in his autobiography and a biography, and provided the inspiration for the epic novel Journey to the West.

Chan lineage has been strong, especially from the 7th century up to the 13th where it also spreaded in Japan, one of the main reason being in the practice itself: instead of having an intellectual approach, Chan is focused on gaining insight and then acting upon it, at the benefit of all. Compared to other schools like Pure Land, Chan identifies awakening as possible here and now, with the “pure land” simply being our own minds. Considering the importance for Chan of being living examples, and the limited interest in Indian texts, the ranking and translating of foreign text into Chinese were not so important. The keystone of Chan was its “homegrown Buddhas”, in full Mahayana tradition.

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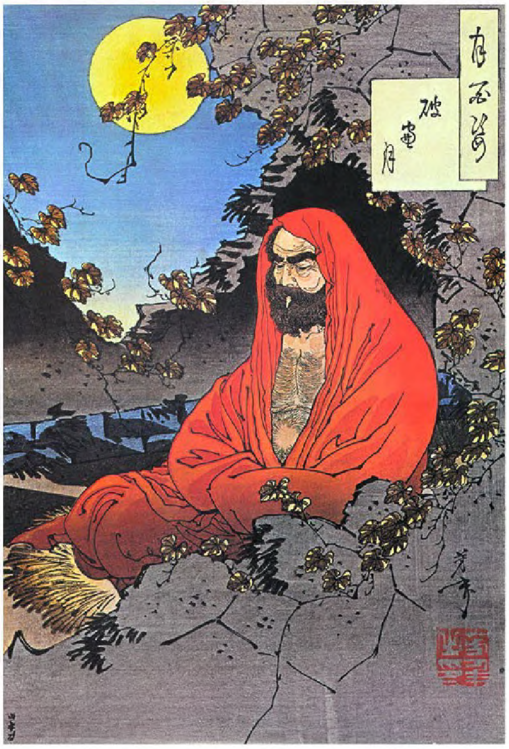
Four examples of living examples for Chan practitioners were the missioner:

1)*Bodhidharma:*



Credits: Yoshitoshi (1887)

the most famous monk, easily recognizable in painting for his strong facial characteristics. He lived during the early 5th century and was the transmitter of Chán to China. There are two known biographues written by Bodhidharma's contemporaries. Yáng Xuànzhī compiled The Record of the Buddhist Monasteries of Luoyang wrote "At that time there was a monk of the Western Region named Bodhidharma, a Persian Central Asian. He traveled from the wild borderlands to China. Seeing the golden disks reflecting in the sun, the rays of light illuminating the surface of the clouds, the jewel-bells on the stupa blowing in the wind, the echoes reverberating beyond the heavens, he sang its praises. He exclaimed: "Truly this is the work of spirits." He said: "I am 150 years old, and I have passed through numerous countries. There is virtually no country I have not visited. Even the distant Buddha realms lack this." He chanted homage and placed his palms together in salutation for days on end.". The second account was written by Tánlín. Tánlín's brief biography of the "Dharma Master" is found in his preface to the Two Entrances and Four Acts: "The Dharma Master was a South Indian of the Western Region. He was the third son of a great Indian king of the Pallava dynasty. His ambition lay in the Mahayana path, and so he put aside his white layman's robe for the black robe of a monk. Lamenting the decline of the true teaching in the outlands, he subsequently crossed distant mountains and seas, traveling about propagating the teaching in Han and Wei." Tánlín's account was the first to mention that Bodhidharma attracted disciples, specifically mentioning Dàoyù and Huìkě.

2) Huineng who, according to tradition, received Bodhidharma's robe and bowl. Hui Neng had hundred of monks with him who translated together – it was more a school than one single person. Two main sources for Huineng's life are the preface to the Platform Sutra

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and the Transmission of the Lamp. Born into the Lu family in 638 A.D. in the town of Xing in Guangdong province. Huineng was from a humble family, and did not have the chance to learn to read or write. He may have been a Hmong or a Miao. One day, while he was delivering firewood to an inn, he heard a guest reciting the Diamond Sutra and he had an awakening. He immediately decided to seek the Way of Buddhahood. The guest gave him ten taels of silver to provide for his mother, and Huineng embarked on his journey. After travelling for thirty days on foot, Huineng arrived at Huang Mei Mountain, where the Fifth Patriarch Hongren presided. "I then went to pay homage to the Patriarch, and was asked where I came from and what I expected to get from him. I replied, "I am a commoner from Hsin Chou of Kwangtung. I have travelled far to pay you respect and I ask for nothing but Buddhahood." "You are a native of Kwangtung, a barbarian? How can you expect to be a Buddha?" asked the Patriarch. I replied, "Although there are northern men and southern men, north and south make no difference to their Buddha-nature. A barbarian is different from Your Holiness physically, but there is no difference in our Buddha-nature." Hongren immediately asked him to do chores in the rice mill. Huineng stayed to chop wood and pound rice for eight months.

3) *Mazu Daoyi*, first Chan master to use unconvential forms of teachings, like “illogical” conversations and shouting (by this time, written records of discussion between master and student were already common practice and kept in high consideration), considering the success of such approach, his own disciples sticked to these techniques which then became common in Chan. Mazu was a Ch'an Buddhist master in China during the Tang dynasty. In dharma-succession through Nanyue to the Sixth Patriarch, Mazu Daoyi contributed far-reaching insights and changes in teaching methods regarding the transmission of awareness. His innovations became widely recognized as characteristic features of Ch'an in China and of Zen in Japan.

4) *Linji*

Credits: Wikipedia

famous for his then unconvential awakening. His methods included shouting and striking, most often using the fly-whisk that was considered a symbol of a Chán master's authority: "The Master saw a monk coming and held his fly whisk straight up. The monk made a low bow, whereupon the Master struck him a blow. The Master saw another monk coming

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and again held his fly whisk straight up. The monk paid no attention, whereupon the Master struck him a blow as well."

With its ups and downs, and breakage within the school of adherents claiming direct lineage (from this or that master) to start a new movement, Chan spread to Korea, thanks to Korean practitioners like Kim Kiaokak (630–729) and Beomnang (632-646), who went to China.

2. Seon

Credits: Taegozen.net

Korea gave a substantial contribution both to Chan and Confucianism ("Korea – A religious history", James Huntley Grayson), which arrived from China. While Japanese Zen is often mentioned by Western researchers, Korean Seon was established well before its Japanese version, and it has been very important for the spread of Buddhism outside Asia.

Ancient Koreans were practising shamanic rites, inspired by their Siberian heritage, even after having adopted Chinese customs in politics and economy; from the six century on, the Korean kingdoms started to practice a distinctive form of Buddhism, and also visited Japan as missioners to spread it. Korean Buddhist was also influenced by local tribal philosopical systems, Confucianism and Taoism (more as a philosopy than as an organized religion). As we see later on, a strong Neo-Confucian movement in Korea almost removed traces of the Buddhist tradition in Korea.

After a long time with Buddhist schools rising and declining (most of them focused on meditation and the importance of the mind, but some with more esoteric teachings), social instability in the area of Silla coincided with the growth of Seon. The Seon use of shock techniques or silent contemplation, focusing more on spontainety than strict doctrine or scriptures, was adeguate for the political situation in Silla – and, as we'll see later on, an ideal fit for Americans and the current interconnected society. Nine schools of Seon were rapidly established in the Sixth century, so Korean Zen went from being teached by Chinese missioners at the benefit of members of Royal court and elites, to a local version of Buddhism, teached by Koreans to other Koreans.

Buddhism followed the political and economic ups and downs of the Korean peninsula. For example, in the 14th century, King Kongmin decided to give more importance to Confucianism, by shaping the political apparatus on its principles and limiting the growing influence of the Buddhist monasteries. These times were important for several reasons, including the rise of Seoul as new capital. During the Yi dinasty, Buddhism found some supporters among rulers, but neo-Confucianism was predominant in the long-term, until it

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turned into a stagnating political ideology and declined. One event which stands out was the conversion of King Sejong – who had been promoting neo-Confucianism and repressing Buddhism for the previous part of his life – to Buddhism: two years before dying, he built a Buddhist temple within the Royal Palace, and passed away as a Buddhist. Once his final days were coming, he must have understood that, while Confucianism was very effective for political goals, on an overall level Buddhist was more helpful.

The opening of Korea to the European powers in 1876 coincided with a revival of Buddhism, supported by King Kojong: unreasonable taxes on monasteries were removed, temples were reconstructed and monks allowed to enter Seoul. Also, Japanese monks were allowed to meet with their Korean counterparts.

The interactions between Japanese and Korean Buddhism became very active, and local monks were divided between the ones accepting marriage and the ones in favour of celibacy. This disagreement became a very critical issue, and in 1954 the Korean President decided to assign to the Chogye the majority of Temples. A sizable number of Koreans identified progress with other Western religions, and the number of Korean Buddhists has been affected by this trend. Which, on the other hand, is also a great chance for the Buddhism nowadays, because Koreans have to reconsider many issues and to step into a inter-religious dialogue with all the other religious movements. This will be a challenge for those Westerners who come out of another tradition and found their home within Eastern Buddhist traditions.

3. Seon goes to Vietnam and Japan

Credits: Guardian.co.uk

Seon was taken to Vietnam as early as the second century CE through the North from central Asia and via Southern routes from India. It has had a symbiotic relationship with Taoism, Chinese spirituality, and the indigenous Vietnamese religion. Buddhism is not practiced the same as in other Asian countries and does not contain the institutional structures, hierarchy, or sanghas that exist in other traditional Buddhist settings. Many Vietnamese define their spiritual needs using a Buddhist worldview.

By the end of the second century, Vietnam developed a major Buddhist centre (probably Mahayana) in the region, commonly known as the Luy Lâu centre, now in the Bắc Ninh province, north of the present day Hanoi city. Luy Lâu was the capital of Giao Chỉ, (the former name of Vietnam), and was a popular place visited by many Indian Buddhist

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missionary monks to China. The monks followed the sea route from the Indian sub-continent to China used by Indian traders. A number of Mahayana sutras and the Agamas were translated into Chinese script at that centre, including the Sutra of Forty-Two Chapters and the Anapanasati.

Over the next 18 centuries Vietnam and China shared many common features of cultural, philosophical and religious heritage. This was due to geographical proximity to one another and Vietnam being annexed twice by the Chinese. Vietnamese Buddhism has been greatly influenced by the development of Mahayana Buddhism in China, with the dominant traditions of Pure Land and Ch'an/Zen. Theravada Buddhism would become incorporated through the annexation of the Khmer land and khmer people.

During the Đinh Dynasty (968-980) Buddhism was recognized by the state as an official religion suggesting that the current kings at the time held Buddhism in high regard. The Early Lê Dynasty (980-1009) would follow a similar path. Reasons for growth of Buddhism during this time is contributed to an influx of educated monks, a newly independent state needing an ideological basis on which to build a country and the development of Confucianism. Buddhism became more prominent during the Lý Dynasty (1009-1225) beginning with the founder Lý Thái Tổ who was raised in a pagoda (Buddhist temple). All of the kings during the Ly Dynasty supported Buddhism as a state religion and this continued into the Trần Dynasty (1225-1400) where Buddhism later developed in combination with Confucianism. Buddhism fell out of favor during the Later Lê Dynasty and would grow under the Nguyễn Dynasty.

A Buddhist revival started in 1920, but under Communist rule many religious practices in Vietnam Buddhism were suppressed. However a government sanctioned and approved United Buddhist Church was created in the North. In the South, The Unified Buddhist Church was created and opposed the communist government.

Thiền Buddhism (Thiền Tông) is the Vietnamese name for the school of Zen Buddhism. The traditional account is that in 580, when an Indian monk named Vinitaruci (Vietnamese: Tì-ni-đa-lưu-chi) traveled to Vietnam after completing his studies with Jianzhi Sengcan, the third patriarch of Chinese Zen. This would be the first appearance of Vietnamese Zen, or Thien (thiền) Buddhism. The sect that Vinitaruci and his lone Vietnamese disciple founded would become known as the oldest branch of Thien. After a period of obscurity, the Vinitaruci School became one of the most influential Buddhist groups in Vietnam by the 10th century, particularly under the patriarch Vạn-Hạnh (died 1018). Other early Vietnamese Zen schools included the Vo Ngon Thong (Vô Ngôn Thông), which was associated with the teaching of Mazu, and the Thao Duong (Thảo Đường), which incorporated nianfo chanting techniques; both were founded by Chinese monks. A new school was founded by King Trần Nhân Tông (1258–1308); called Trúc Lâm (Bamboo Grove) school, which evinced a deep influence from Confucian and Taoist philosophy. Nevertheless, Trúc Lâm's prestige waned over the following centuries as Confucianism became dominant in the royal court. In the 17th century, a group of Chinese monks led by Nguyên Thiều introduced the Ling school (Lâm Tế). A more domesticated offshoot of Lâm Tế, the Liễu Quán school, was founded in the 18th century and has since been the predominant branch of Vietnamese Zen.

Seon was taken to Japan by Korean missioners in the 12th century. Currently, there are three main Zen schools in the Country: Sōtō, Rinzai, and Obaku. In the 1960s, Japanese masters moved to North America and contributed to the spread of Seon/Zen; many of the Seon terms which are familiar, even to people not practising it, are in their Japanese version. Soon, American-born masters started to spread Zen in USA and Canada.

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Credits: Wikimedia

Nanpo Shōmyō (1235–1308) studied Linji teachings in China before founding the Japanese Otokan lineage, the most influential branch of Rinzai. In 1215, Dōgen, a younger contemporary of Eisai's, journeyed to China himself, where he became a disciple of the Caodong master Tiantong Rujing. After his return, Dōgen established the Sōtō school, the Japanese branch of Caodong. The Obaku lineage was introduced in the 17th century by Ingen, a Chinese monk. Ingen had been a member of the Linji school, the Chinese equivalent of Rinzai, which had developed separately from the Japanese branch for hundreds of years. Thus, when Ingen journeyed to Japan following the fall of the Ming Dynasty to the Manchus, his teachings were seen as a separate school. The Obaku school was named for Mount Obaku (Chinese: Huangboshan), which had been Ingen's home in China.

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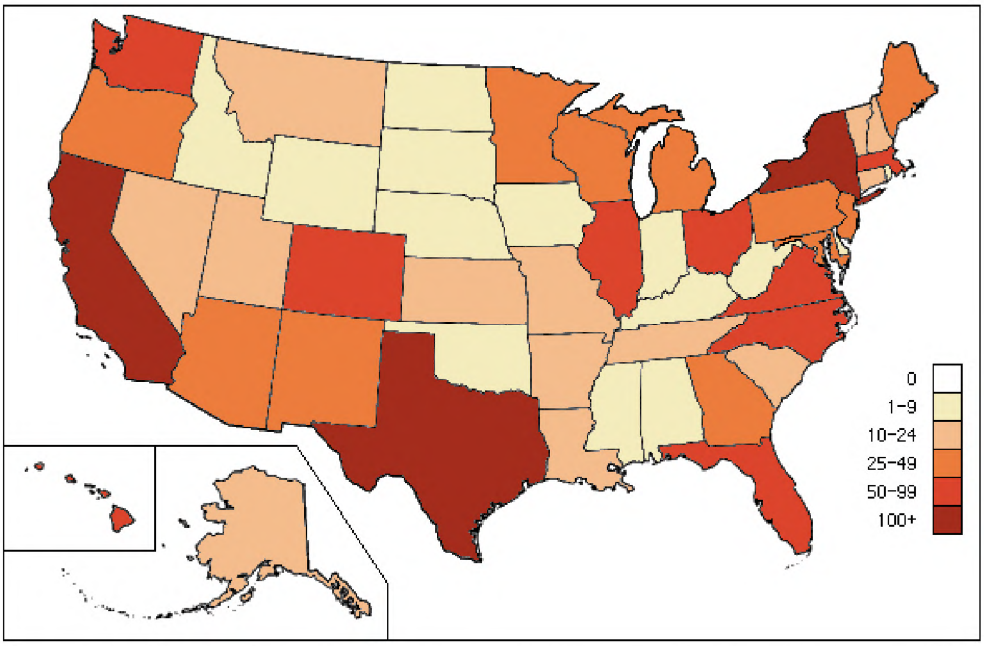
4. Zen goes to North America

Seon is a good match for the American approach to life: instead of providing only an analysis of how things are, it shows a course of action and the benefits of taking it. Instead of promoting reliance on other people, or a solitary path, it offers a middle-way, which fits both the need for individual rights and social convenience. Also, there are a number of Korean Buddhist temples US which makes easier to provide guidance to practitioners.

Distribution of Buddhist Centers in the U.S.

Research in Progress: 2039 Centers, October 2004



Source - The Pluralism Project at Harvard University: Directory of Religious Centers © 2004
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Seon is more known in US as Zen, which is a house-hold name. A number of manuals – some of them having next to nothing in common with Zen – have been named "The Zen and art of...". This trend started after the success, in the 1970s, of the book "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance" by Robert M. Pirsig. The author, while narrating the motorcycling experiences of him (initially, a "technical guy" who needs to know all the details) and his friend (who just rides, delegating motorcycling repairing to professionals), provides his view on Zen, that he realizes along the book: a middle path, where we know when to use our analytical skills, and when just to let it be. This may be considered one of the most straight-forward, non-intellectual ways to describe a Zen experience, following a Zen-approach. Pirsig got inspiration from his book from an older publication, "Zen in the Art of Archery" by Eugen Herrigel, which had a more introspective approach.

I strongly believe that, had the authors chosen to use "Seon and the art of..." instead of Zen, now Seon itself – which is the path Chan followed to reach Japan – would have been a name understood by the masses. Also, Chosun Dynasty violence against Buddhism in Korea may have weakened a bit its readiness to go abroad and teach it in the 20th century, when Buddhism started to flourish again at home.

Japanese Zen monks started to develop centres in US in the early 1960s, in line with Japanese tradition and customs. But, by the mid 1970s, American monks already started

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to take over, so Zen was even more American. One of the most tangible result of the spread of Zen/Chan in USA, is the City of 10,000 Buddhas (http://www.cttbusa.org) in North California; here, monks strictly enforce the traditional monastic rules, with several monks in permanent silent, one meal per day, etc. but the town also welcomes Westerners, often coming mainly to meditate and live the local organic life.

The vitality of Korean Buddhism in North America and at home is seen in temples, were monks live and lay-people come on retreats, and the number of missioners sent overseas: as reported on Wikipedia.org and KoreanBuddhism.net at the end of the previous century, there were 104 Korean Buddhist temples in USA, and 148 overall in fifteen countries. Another reason for the success of Seon is the number of groups and information available online, through dedicated communities or within sites discussing all main Buddhist schools.

After the fall of South Vietnam to communism in 1975 at the end of the Vietnam War, the first major Buddhist community appeared in North America. Since this time the North American Vietnamese Buddhist community has grown to 160 temples and centers, however Vietnamese Buddhism is one of the least popular forms of Buddhism among Buddhists of European descent. Two reasons for this are a lack of meditation within the practice (which is generally favored by Western Buddhists), not much proselytizing being carried out by the Vietnamese Buddhists and the fact that Vietnamese monks do not tend to use English to reach out to Buddhists who are not of Vietnamese descent.

The most famous practitioner of synchronized Thiền Buddhism in the West is Thích Nhất Hạnh who has authored dozens of books and founded Dharma center Plum Village in France together with his colleague, Bhiksuni and Zen Master Chân Không. According to Nguyen and Barber, Thich Nhat Hanh's fame in the Western world as a proponent of engaged Buddhism and a new zen style has "no affinity with or any foundation in traditional Vietnamese Buddhist practices" and according to Alexander Soucy (2007) his style of Zen Buddhism is not reflective of actual Vietnamese Buddhism. (Yet Thích Nhất Hạnh often recounts about his early Zen practices in Vietnam in his Dharma talks saying that he continued and developed this practice in the West which has a distinctive Vietnamese Thien flavor.) Thich Nhat Hanh's Buddhist teachings have started to return to a Vietnam where the Buddhist landscape is now being shaped by the combined Vietnamese & Westernized Buddhism that is focused more on the meditative practices.

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5. Western Buddhism Today

Buddhism has been consistently absorbing elements of the culture of the countries in which it is practised. Different local customs are included also, and may influence the form of rituals and ceremonies. There is a general distinction between Buddhism brought to the West by Asian immigrants, which may be Mahayana or a traditional East Asian mix, and Buddhism as practised by converts, which is often Zen, Pure Land, Indian Vipassana or Tibetan Buddhism. Some Western Buddhists are actually non-denominational and accept teachings from a variety of different sects, which is far less frequent in Asia.

Today, Buddhism is practised by increasing numbers of people in the Americas, Europe and Oceania. Buddhism has become the fastest growing religion in Australia and some other Western nations. The largest Buddhist temple in the Southern Hemisphere is the Nan Tien Temple (translated as "Southern Paradise Temple"), situated at Wollongong, Australia, while the largest Buddhist temple in the Western Hemisphere is the Hsi Lai Temple (translated as "Coming West Temple"), in California, USA. Both are operated by the Fo Guang Shan Order, founded in Taiwan, and around 2003 the Grand Master, Venerable Hsing Yun, asked for Nan Tien Temple and Buddhist practice there to be operated by native Australians citizens within about thirty years.

A feature of Buddhism in the West today is the emergence of other groups which attempt at adapting Buddhist practice to daily lives of their members. For example, lama Chögyam Trungpa, the founder of the Shambhala meditation movement, claimed in his teachings that his intention was to strip the ethnic baggage away from traditional methods of working with the mind and to deliver the essence of those teachings to his western students. Chögyam Trungpa also founded Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado in 1974. Trungpa's movement has also found particular success in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia, Shambhala International being based out of Halifax.

Another example of schools evolving new idioms for the transmission of the dharma are the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO), founded by Sangharakshita in 1967, and recently renamed Triratna Buddhist Community. Also the Diamond Way Organisation, founded by Ole Nydahl, with more than 600 buddhist centers across the world.

One personality which emerged in the field of meditation and health-care, adapting Buddhist principles to these fields, is Jon Kabat-Zinn. Founder and former executive director of the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society, and also of the Stress Reduction Clinic, where mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) originated. His research since 1979 has focused on mind/body interactions for healing and on the clinical applications and cost-effectiveness of mindfulness meditation training for people with chronic pain and stress-related disorders, including a work-site study of the effects of MBSR on the brain and how it processes emotions, particularly under stress, and on the immune system (in collaboration with Dr. Richard Davidson). He has trained groups from a wide variety of professions in mindfulness. He is the author and co-author of many books about mindful living, including Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life, Coming to Our Senses: Healing Ourselves and the World Through Mindfulness, and most recently, Arriving At Your Own Door: 108 Lessons in Mindfulness, and with Williams, Teasdale, and Segal, The Mindful Way Through Depression: Freeing Yourself from Chronic Unhappiness. As said, his life work has been largely dedicated to bringing mindfulness into

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the mainstream of medicine and society. Kabat-Zinn is the author or co-author of scientific papers on mindfulness and its clinical applications. He has written two bestselling books: Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness (Delta, 1991), and Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life (Hyperion, 1994). He co-authored with Myla Kabat-Zinn Everyday Blessings: The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting, (Hyperion, 1997).

Roshi Bernie Glassman and his wife Sandra Jishu Holmes brought Zen wisdom to heal the wounds of conflicts around the World, with the Zen Peace Makers. Also known as Zen Peacemakers Circle or simply Zen Peacemakers is an organization of socially-engaged Buddhists. Zen Peacemakers is a school within the White Plum Asanga lineage of Taizan Maezumi. The order is based on three principles: plunging into the unknown, bearing witness to the pain and joy of the world and a commitment to heal oneself and the world." Its projects have included a Paris soup kitchen for immigrants and non-violence efforts in Palestine, with joint Israeli-Palestinian peaceful coexistence projects in Israel. Zen Peacemakers in Poland established 'Nonviolent Communications Training and Practice' in the national public school system and opened an AIDS hospice. The Auschwitz project brought together families of the Holocaust survivors and the descendants of those who ran the camps to '"bear witness to the horrors of war" during retreats at the site of the concentration camp in Poland. In the United States, Zen Peacemakers campaigns for prison reform, provided hospice care and worked with the poor in both inner city and rural areas. Notable Zen Peacemakers include: Ellen Burstyn, Enkyo Pat O'Hara, Joan Halifax, Robert Kennedy, Claude Anshin Thomas

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6. Seon in the cyberspace

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Internet is a very effective and efficient way to spread the Dharma: it allows Universities like the Institute for Buddhist Studies Austria, to reach people far in the World, and keep the discussion about Buddhism fresh with inputs from different prospective. We need to consider that tools are as valuable as the use we make of them. Internet is not only a virtual space, it is a web of communities, so it can be used to share text and teachings, create a sense of belonging and mobilize resources. Many of the dictionaries and Sutra's archives are already mentioned in our e-learning material. For this reason, here I will focus on my prospective of Seon in cyberspace.

There are several examples of "Buddhist early-adopters" of internet. This include the Chollian Buddhist Community (http://www.buddhasite.net/) which already in 1997 had created its own website, with dedicated address. This community, made by and for Koreans, mixes online and offline meetings. Considering the availability in Korea of fast-internet, Internet can become an important channel. This is especially true if we consider that 80% of Korean population is concentrated in urban centers, while many Temples are scattered in the rural areas, making it more complicated for working Buddhists to take part in their Temple's life.

Another example is the Zen Mountain Monastery (http://www.mro.org/) which in 1996 already had a Cybermonk (a senior monastic available through e-mail to answer Dharma questions) and was organizing "Dharma Combats" to test understanding of Zen, posting on the site and mailing a koan , then discussing it in the Chat. By having public chat, where both current students and visitors can share comments, ZMM ensures the answers are

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fast, and spontaneous. When smaller groups meet, the result is a slower-paced, more intellectual interaction.

It is interesting to see lists from the 1990s, like the one available on http://www.colorado.edu/ReligiousStudies/TheStrip/Archive/ambud/journ.html and verify which initiatives have evolved, which ones are just not updated anymore and which ones are no longer available.

Most of the academic researches mentioned in the bibliography point out the risks related to spirituality in the cyberage, like undermining of religious leaders' authority, peers loyalty being stronger than loyalty to central authority, etc. Considering the main point in Seon is not a central authority, but the relationship teacher-student and transmission by example, Seon approach can only be enriched by blending new media with the traditional face-to-face communication.

Seon is in tune with our times: it is not realistic to expect lay-people to be able to dedicate themselves to a fully academic approach to Buddhism, while also taking care of their families and mundane obligations. Seon provides this intuitive approach to Enlightmenent; also, by making clear there is no secret knowledge to access, but simply a need of removing the veil of ignorance from our eyes and see things as they really are, it is in tune with science. The Taego school goes even further, by allowing married members of the Shanga to be ordained as monks or become Dharma instructors.

Online, all these features of Seon can be leveraged to make other people's lives better. Some of us already walked a path and recognized in Buddhism a way to find answers; others have not decided yet to pursue a spiritual path, but still are searching for answers to their daily challenges: how to calm our mind? Improve our relations? Educate children? Etc. It is likely that, sooner or later, these people searching for practical answers will feel there is something more missing, and may decide to embrace Buddhism.

To make these statements concrete, below we analyze some of the tools available to Seon – and any other Buddhist school or spiritual group – with their main features, strenghts and weaknesses.

Social networks

FaceBook and similar platforms allow to create profiles for individuals and pages for organisations, post updates, pictures, etc. Considering the amount of people using SN, and also the frequency with which they come back if the social network is well focused on friends and not occasional meetings, it is an optimal tool to keep people engaged, informed and make easier for them to share their support for Seon. Main weakness is the growing spam, and the potential risk of losing active users – like MySpace – if the community is not well focused. They can be used to organise online meditation sessions. Facebook groups and pages need to be updated often, even several times per day; leaving the door open to more than one moderator, and also have "fans" comments, help in this. There are two main tracks to take in creating such groups: one is to have a smaller, even invitation-only, group, which is strongly focused on a particular Buddhist order, where people really know each other personally. The second, to have "interest groups", like meditation, happiness, etc., where the message is focused on a benefit for the members, such benefit being delivered through the tools available to Buddhist practitioners. These tracks can be taken at the same time, and people from the first track play a major role in growing the second track group, especially when the project is at its

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beginning. The author of this paper tried to launch an indepent social-network, MyPacis.eu, focused on peace starting from Europe. The number of users was growing fast, meaning a lot of time and some financial resources started to get drained, so a suggestion is to piggy-back on existing social networks, unless one has a lot of time and money to invest to keep the community moderated etc.

Blogging

Including Blogger and WordPress, which allow to post articles, updates, comments. Very user-friendly, and also search-engine friendly (attracting readers who searched for the Seon topics we blogged about). Even with comments, usually are less interactive than a community, but allow selected users to contribute with their own articles, so readers may become also writers. Useful to post and comment koans, Buddhist news, etc.

Microblogging

Applications like Twitter allow to write, in 140 characters or less, short updates. Ideal to publish Koan, and get immediate short comments. Not suitable for longer discussions. Also, many users follow hundreds of micro-blogs at the same time, it is easy to be buried under the number of updates.

e-Learning

Already used for years by Universities, especially in US with Typo3, several commercial solutions and also open-source ones. Allow students to study at their own place, and interact through forums etc. To keep the learning experience fresh, if possible it is useful to mix online and face-to-face learning. Regardless of how useful and interesting one e-course is, some people feel less committed when they learn online, this resulting in less timely actions and often high drop-rate from start to end of e-courses. Like WBU is doing, e-Learning can be used to spread the Dharma. Considering licensing fees for commercial software can leave deep bites in non-profits budgets, it is better to focus on open source solutions.

Other tools

Several other communication channels and platforms are available to spread the Dharma. These include:

- **Wikis:** collaborative encyclopedias. Like in the case of Wikipedia, volunteers add, edit and monitor new entries. Wikis are often comprehensive, but sometimes not fully reliable. Especially when topics get very specific, it is necessary to ensure peers review the articles for accuracy. Several Dharma-related entries are already in Wikipedia.

- **Forums (phpBB):** allow users to start threads, reply to existing conversations, etc. Very useful tool for asyncronos communication, they often need moderators to remove spam, off-topic or unpolite messages. They are the most user-friendly way to discuss Buddhism for daily practitioners.

- **Podcasts (distributed by iTunes):** effective way to reach iPod users. Listeners can download single podcasts, or subscribe to receive for free and automatically all the future updates. In addition to audio podcasts, there are videocasts; visually powerful, but limited in use because many people prefer to listen while "on the go" than to watch on small screens. This media is used a lot by organizations as FWBO.

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• **Mobile applications (for example, iPhone on Apple's application store):** including Zen bells, Buddha's daily quotations, etc.

• **Text repository:** plain-text, digital version of Sutras and commentaries. The most basic form of internet use, still very powerful in making text available World-wide at no costs.

There are also a number of sites which are not "formally" Buddhist, but still offer opportunities for engaged Buddhists, for example:

1 Non-profit: several Buddhist associations and groups can be reached online.

2 Social entrepreneurship: there are Buddhist entrepreneurs, like WildMind, offering their services online, respecting the precept of rightful occupation.

3 P2P: several Buddhist documentaries are available for free online. It is important to visit beforehand the site of the documentary-makers, to ensure they agreed to share freely online their work. Virtually all makers provide free previews, on P2P or YouTube, a number charges for the full version.

For people who are already committed to family life and also to practice Buddhism, is very important to have access to guidance at flexible times. Also, reaching Buddhists in their native language is very important, because some explanations may be complicated to understand in foreign languages.

Of course, there are elements that, as pointed out by Madelein Frost on http://storage02.video.muni.cz/prf/mujlt/storage/1205309867_sb_r07-frost.pdf would be missing if the only experience people have about Seon would be limited to online practice. What we advocated here is a melting of online and offline practice, which takes the strengths of both.

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Conclusion

We learnt that the only time-frame where it is possible to act is here and now. The current situation is already showing trends which will likely become even stronger in the future. First, Seon will continue to spread from Country to Country, from generation to generation, renewing itself as river water does when running through stones. Seon, not having the dogmatic and academic approach which often become heavy constrain to adaptation to local and contemporary needs, being dynamic and engaged with a better World (as in the overall Mahayana tradition) where what we need to know is already in front of us, and the Buddha nature is recognized as the true state of the mind, is ready to become even more widespread.

By using modern technologies, in a World where West and East already exchanged their views and values, a mode democratic, family/lay-person conscious, practical approach to Buddhism is key to improve society. While online experience is not a substitute for "traditional" approach, together they make more feasible to practice Seon on a daily basis.

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We would love to hear your feedback: suggestions about new topics? Ideas about improvements? Like to share your experience and make it an eBook, White Paper, check-list? Please let us know through http://www.amareway.org/ There, you can also read more on related topics. Thanks!

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About AmAre Way

Happiness = Aware (Being) + Meditating + Active (Being) + Respectful (Being) + Eating (Properly)

3.1 How to calculate it?

Aware		Meditating		Active		Respectful		Eating	
W	G	W	G	W	G	W	G	W	G

Explanation of variables:
A: Aware (being) of each other and couple's feelings, thoughts, needs and wants
M: Meditating together, or at least sharing thoughts
A1:Active (being) together, do things together
R: Respectful (being) of each other and couple's feelings, thoughts, needs and wants
E: Eating properly and support each other healthy lifestyle, and also feed the relationship with positive feelings and thoughts
(…): if there are additional aspects considered too important to be included in the rest of the formula, they can be weighted and graded here

For each variable, please specify:
w: weight, importance given to each aspect (sum of all weights should be 100)
g: grade, rating given to each aspect (each grade is a value between 0 and 1)

If you want to use a spreadsheet, where you can insert the values and see them automatically calculated, you can use: http://spsh.amareway.org/

3.2 What does it mean?

AmAre formula is meant to be descriptive and preventive, but not predictive. That is, it quantifies the current situation, and the strengths and weaknesses we should be aware of and act upon. Regardless of what the number says, we are always responsible, here and now, for our happiness, so a high result means we should keep building our happiness as we have successfully done so far, and a lower result means there are aspects to act upon to improve our lives.

One of the formula's strengths is its unlikeness to reach One, the perfect score, or Zero. This formula is useful so we can improve our awareness about the situation so far, and build a better present. Once the formula served its purposes, we can move on. Because the ultimate happiness is not reaching number 1, it is in finding and renewing the appropriate life-dynamics. If we can accept the way life is, and the fact that different people assign different weights and grades to the pillars of their happiness, and still respect and care about all of us, doing our best for the mutual happiness, we are on the way to build together a lasting happy living.

This is a scale to interpret the overall result of the formula:

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0-0.3: This is an unlikely result, so please double check each values inserted. If values are correct, it is possible the perception of your SWB tends toward emphasizing the non-positive aspects, or that there is a short-term serious issue. This means there is a need to work on all your priorities to make them more satisfying to you in the medium term.

0.31-0.60: Your level of SWB could be higher, if you are closer to 0.31 result. If you are closer to 0.5, you are near an exact average value where you perceive the same value of positive and non-positive components in your life. In both cases, by working on the AmAre variables (starting from the ones with higher weight and lower grade), you can substantially improve your well-being.

0.61-0.90: You tend towards an optimal level of SWB. You feel happy, and likely experienced most or at least many of the happiness "fringe benefits". You likely live joyfully everyday: no matter the ups and downs we all have, you can make the best of them for yourself and the people around you.

0.91-1: This result is unlikely to be reached, so please double check each values inserted. If values are correct, you are achieving the maximum level of SWB, which you can sustain by living joyfully .

To interpret the value of each AmAre variable, you can use the same scale. If a variable is high in weight, and low in grade, then it requires attention and action to improve it. If a variable is low in weight, and high in grade, then you may ask yourself if its grade is slightly over estimated.

We suggest to calculate your AmAre Index once per week for the first 5 weeks. Then, to calculate it once per month. Please make sure to start from scratch at each calculation, meaning you should not check values assigned in the past; after calculating your current AmAre Index, you can then check what changed compared to the previous calculations. If you want to be reminded about monthly calculation, you can register the AmAre newsletter on. http://www.amareway.org/

1.3 Where are references and further information?

http://www.amareway.org/
(Official website)

http://www.amareway.org/personal-development-free-personal-development-ebooks/
(Free eBooks: AmAre applied to blogging, social media, etc.)

Subjective well-being blog
(Review of research about Subjective well-being)

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